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STATE AUTOMATION SYSTEMS STUDY

SITE VISIT: NOVEMBER 8 - 10, 1993

ALABAMA STATE REPORT

NOVEMBER 1, 1994

FINAL

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ALABAMA STATE REPORT

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STATE PROFILE

System Name:	State and County Integrated System for Certification and Issuance (SCI-II)
Start Date:	1981
Completion Date:	1982
Contractor:	State developed
Transfer From:	New Mexico
Cost:	
Actual:	$1,350,000
Projected:	$3,217,500
FSP Share:	$1,350,000
FSP %:	100%
Number of Users:	1,300 (Est. - State staff and local office staff in eligibility and support positions only)
Basic Architecture:	
Mainframe:	IBM 3090/600S
Workstations:	IBM and Telex 3270 terminals and Unisys B28 PCs operating in 3270 emulation mode
Telecommunications Network:	Five T1 backbone circuits connecting 300 9.6 KB and 19.2 KB dedicated circuits
System Profile:	
Programs:	Food Stamp

1.0 STATE OPERATING ENVIRONMENT

The Department of Human Resources (DHR) is responsible for the State-supervised and county-operated administration of assistance programs in Alabama. There are three major areas within DHR: Programs, Field Administration, and Fiscal and Administrative Services. The following divisions report to the Deputy Commissioner for Programs:

- Family and Children Services
- Child Support Enforcement
- Adult Services
- Public Assistance
- Electronic Benefits Transfer
- Integrated Client Data Base (ICDB)
- Food Stamp
- Social Services Contracts

The following divisions exist within Fiscal and Administrative Services: Finance, General Services, Personnel, Program Integrity, and Information Systems. The Division of Information Systems (DIS) contains the following units: ICDB, DataBase and Administrative Systems, System Development and Maintenance, Network and Operational Services, and Management Support. Support for current and planned systems is provided by DIS.

The Field Administration area is responsible for field operations (except for consultant responsibilities for the Food Stamp Program and other program areas are handled by each program division), quality control and training, and community involvement. Field operations are directed by seven regional managers who report to the Deputy Commissioner for Field Administration. The regional managers supervise the 67 county department directors, who are appointed by their respective county boards. Alabama operates 67 county level direct service welfare offices.

The State population in 1990 was 4,062,608, and approximately 11.5 percent of the population were food stamp recipients. The food stamp recipient population in Alabama is distributed between urban and rural areas.

Except for 1986 and 1991, the unemployment rate in Alabama declined each year from 1982 to 1991. Between 1982 and 1990, the State's unemployment rate decreased from 14.4 percent to 6.8 percent, which was a 53 percent decrease. The State's unemployment rate increased to 7.2 percent in 1991.

The October 1992 report, *The Fiscal Survey of States*, provides the following information

- State government employment levels in Alabama increased by 0.65 percent between 1992 and 1993. This change was similar in magnitude but differed in direction from the national average 0.60 percent decrease in state government employment.

- Alabama's FY 1993 net revenues increased by $104.9 million due to an increase in motor fuels taxes.

- The regional outlook indicated that growth was slow and the recovery uneven in the Southeast states. The regional weighted unemployment rate of 7.9 percent was slightly higher than the national average of 7.8 percent, but the per capita regional personal income increase of 3.6 percent was greater than the national average of 2.4 percent.

2.0 FOOD STAMP PROGRAM OPERATIONS

The DHR Food Stamp Division is responsible for Food Stamp Program (FSP) administration at the State level. The division consists of the following offices: Policy Development and Data Processing Coordination, Quality Improvement and Program Training, County Assistance, and Hearings and Client Services.

Local and systems support for FSP operations are provided through the DHR Field Administration and the Fiscal and Administrative Services areas, respectively. The State and County Integrated System for Certification and Issuance (SCI-II) system supports Food Stamp Program operations by providing automated support for eligibility and issuance functions. Local FSP operations are performed in county direct service offices.

2.1 Food Stamp Program Participation

The average monthly participation for FSP and other assistance programs is provided below in Table 2.1. Participation data prior to 1990 was not available. The direction and magnitude of participation changes varied among programs. The number of food stamp Program households increased by 24.5 percent between 1990 and 1992, while the number of individuals receiving FSP benefits increased by 19.5 percent during the same period. The number of Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC) program cases increased by 11.3 percent between 1990 and 1992. Participation in both the Foster Care and Child Support Enforcement Programs decreased by 5 percent during the three-year period. There was a 76.7 percent decrease in the number of Medicaid only cases between 1990 and 1992.

Table 2.1 Average Monthly Public Assistance Participation

PROGRAM	1992	1991	1990	1989	1988
AFDC					
Cases	50,753	49,473	45,590	N/A	N/A
Individuals	141,822	140,298	138,774		
Foster Care	773	866	814	N/A	N/A
FSP					
Households	211,054	183,771	169,535	N/A	N/A
Individuals	558,273	501,794	467,192		
Child Support	280,295	249,684	295,393	N/A	N/A
Medicaid					
Medicaid only	5,765	6,503	24,754	N/A	N/A

2.2 FSP Benefits Issued Versus FSP Administrative Costs

The ratio of benefits issued to FSP administrative costs has improved from 11.8:1 in 1988 to 15.5:1 in 1992.

Alabama's average monthly benefit issuance per household over the last five years, as provided in Table 2.2, has increased.[1]

Table 2.2 FSP Benefits Issued

	1992	1991	1990	1989	1988
Average Monthly Benefit Per Household	$180.75	$176.24	$165.07	$146.65	$142.29

2.3 FSP Administrative Costs

Alabama's Food Stamp Program administrative costs for the past five years are provided in Table 2.3.[2] While total costs increased each year, average cost per household increased in 1989 and decreased in subsequent years. Overall, the average Federal administrative cost per household decreased slightly during the five year period.

[1] The number of households and benefit amounts use data reported in the FNS *State Activity Reports* for each year.

[2] The number of households and FSP Federal administrative costs are derived from data reported in the FNS *State Activity Reports* for each year.

Table 2.3 FSP Federal Administrative Costs

	1992	1991	1990	1989	1988
Total FSP Federal Admin. Cost	$29,002,689	$26,883,523	$25,646,156	$24,851,299	$22,450,843
Avg. Federal Admin. Cost Per Household Per Month	$11.63	$12.03	$13.03	$13.20	$12.02

2.4 System Impacts on Program Performance

Areas of Food Stamp Program performance that could potentially be affected by the automated systems that support the Program include:

- Staffing
- Responsiveness to regulatory change
- Combined Official Payment Error Rates
- Claims Collection
- Certification/Reviews

2.4.1 Staffing

Alabama staff reported that total caseworker staffing and the number of issuance staff have decreased during the past five years. The average caseload per eligibility worker (EW) is currently 413; the caseload has increased during this period.

State staff provided information regarding current staffing levels. Alabama primarily has program specific workers, but each county (excluding 3 Avenues to Self-Sufficiency through Employment Training Services (ASSETS) demonstration counties) has specific food stamp workers, with public assistance workers handling food stamps for "pure" public assistance households. The total number of food stamp eligibility workers is 469. FSP operations also are supported by 132 food stamp EW supervisors and 77 issuance workers. In addition, other staff in the direct service offices include: 365 Public Assistance (PA) eligibility workers, 52 PA supervisors, and 206 clerical support staff and data entry operators.

2.4.2 Responsiveness to Regulatory Change

As shown in Exhibit A-2.1 in Appendix A, Alabama implemented most regulatory changes in a timely manner. The only regulation which was implemented late was code

1.4, a provision of the Mickey Leland Act which required that the State use a standard estimate of shelter expense for households with homeless members. State staff indicated that implementation of this change was a low priority. At the time it was to be implemented, there was a resource conflict with a cost of living allowance change being made in the system.

Two regulatory changes were determined to be not applicable in the Alabama environment. These regulations were code 1.1, excluding as income State or local General Assistance (GA) payments to the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS), and code 1.2, excluding from income annual school clothing allowances. These changes were not applicable because Alabama does not provide GA benefits or school clothing allowances.

The State generally did not have significant problems implementing regulatory changes; however, State staff indicated that provisions 274.2(b)(2) and 274.2(b)(3), both dealing with initial allotments, were the most problematic changes to implement.

2.4.3 Combined Official Payment Error Rate

Alabama's official combined error rate, as indicated in Table 2.4, decreased between 1988 and 1991 and increased in 1992. The large decrease in 1989 was partially offset by the large increase in 1992 resulting in a five year aggregate decrease of approximately 16.5 percent.

Table 2.4 Official Combined Error Rate

	1992	1991	1990	1989	1988
Combined Error Rate	8.23	5.18	5.75	5.84	9.86

2.4.4 Claims Collection

Table 2.5 presents data indicating the total value of claims established, the value of claims collected, and the percentage of claims established that were collected. The dollar value of claims established increased each year during the five year period, except 1990. The value of claims collected followed a similar pattern.

The year-to-year fluctuations in the percentage of claims collected and the 1992 data -- which shows that the value of claims collected exceeds the value of claims established -- occur because claims may not be collected in the same year in which they are established. The percentage of claims collected is affected by the total number of claims established, whether the individual is still receiving benefits, the amount of available assets, and other factors.

Table 2.5 Total Claims Established/Collected

	1992	1991	1990	1989	1988
Total Claims Established	$3,430,129	$2,982,005	$2,030,425	$2,961,293	$2,017,173
Total Claims Collected	$3,457,335	$1,844,465	$1,430,028	$1,919,397	$1,706,644
As a Percent of Total Claims Established	100.8%	61.9%	70.4%	64.8%	84.6%

2.4.5 Certification/Reviews

A post implementation review of the SCI-II system was conducted by the Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) Southeast Regional Office (SERO) in 1983. The system met the requirements for food stamp systems at that time.

Because SCI-II system supports only FSP, the system was not reviewed by DHHS.

3.0 OVERVIEW OF THE SYSTEM

This section discusses the functionality of the current SCI-II system, related sub-systems, and interfaced modules. Changes expected to occur with the completion of the Integrated Client Data Base (ICDB) project also are discussed. Current systems that support the operation of the various assistance programs in Alabama include:

- ***SCI-II,*** the statewide system that supports FSP eligibility and issuance functions
- ***Public Assistance Reporting System (PARS),*** a statewide system that supports eligibility and issuance functions for the AFDC and AFDC-related Medicaid Programs
- ***Income and Eligibility Verification System (IEVS),*** a Federally mandated computerized matching system that supports the Food Stamp, AFDC, and Medicaid programs
- ***Child Support,*** a statewide eligibility system that supports the Child Support Enforcement (CSE) Program in Alabama

- ***Comprehensive Claims System (CCS),*** a statewide system that supports the claims process for the Food Stamp and AFDC Programs

3.1 System Functionality

SCI-II is designed to track clients and issue FSP benefits. It is an on-line system with terminals in all county offices and some State offices. The system consists of five major sub-systems: eligibility, certification, issuance, monthly reporting, and management reporting. Major features of SCI-II and other systems supporting the FSP are discussed in this section. Areas addressed include:

- ***Registration.*** Similar procedures are used statewide for FSP applicants. Clients begin the food stamp application process by completing a paper application form, which is either mailed into the local office or presented in person.

  Both on-line and batch searches are performed at registration. The SCI-II system checks for duplicate participation in the Food Stamp Program on-line at registration using the name, Social Security number (SSN), race, sex, date of birth (DOB), and address of the applicant. Clerical staff are required to review potential matches in the participation file and indicate whether the record should be included in the case file. During overnight batch processing, the IEVS database and the State's "Clearinghouse" system also are searched. Reports providing search results are provided to workers on the next business day.

  There are several manual functions that must be performed by the worker. Application data is recorded on a coding sheet, which is provided to a data entry operator who enters all registration and certification data into the system. Screen prints are made reflecting the registration data that has been entered into the system. The intake worker determines the applicant's eligibility for expedited service. All scheduling functions also are manual.

- ***Eligibility Determination.*** SCI-II has the ability to perform the following functions: calculate monthly gross income, calculate monthly net income, and determine eligibility.

  SCI-II also has some limitations. The system does not support interactive interviewing. After the intake interview is completed, the intake worker completes a coding sheet. Data entry operators input data into the system using the coding sheet as the information source. The system also does not provide an outstanding verification report in either batch or on-line mode; however, it does allow the worker to "pend" a case for future submission of necessary verifications.

- ***Benefit Calculation.*** The SCI-II system calculates benefit levels, which are then reviewed and authorized by the eligibility worker. Supervisory authorization is not required for newly applying or re-applying cases, but it is required for special issuances. Due to the centralized data entry design of the SCI-II system, on-line

notification of the calculated benefit level is not available to the eligibility worker at the time of the interview.

The budgeting module of SCI-II performs several functions. It calculates the food stamp allotment, determines the number and denomination of coupon books to be issued, and interfaces with the Comprehensive Claims System.

- ***Benefit Issuance.*** The major modules of the issuance subsystem are: over the counter (OTC) issuance, mail issuance, and issuance reconciliation. Issuance represents an area in which individual counties have significant responsibility. Counties establish schedules for staggered issuance over the first 10 to 20 days of the month and food stamp issuance positions are staffed by county level workers for both OTC and mail issuance. It is possible for clients to receive expedited issuances the same day the application is submitted. Expedited issuance timeframes are usually met; however, heavy caseload volumes and understaffing impact the ability to meet these timeframes.

  OTC issuance provides for immediate on-line issuance of FSP benefits. The module supports the issuance of supplemental and/or retroactive benefits and interfaces with the Comprehensive Claims System. The vast majority of FSP benefits in Alabama are provided through OTC issuance.

  The mail issuance module provides for mailing food stamps to clients, supports the issuance of supplemental and retroactive benefits, and also interfaces with the CCS. Approximately 11 percent of all food stamp benefits are issued via direct mail. The clients who receive benefits through this issuance method are usually Supplemental Security Income (SSI) recipients. Local cashiers receive reports indicating eligible recipients. Upon entry of the recipient's case number, the system prints a card which is used as a mailing label and inserted in a window envelope with food coupons.

  The issuance reconciliation module performs both daily and monthly reconciliation. The system performs reconciliation of monthly issuance files for on-going cases and daily issuances for new approvals and other special issuances.

  In addition to mail and OTC issuance, Alabama is conducting a cashout demonstration project. The Avenues to Self-Sufficiency through Employment Training Services (ASSETS) demonstration, which is part of the State's broader welfare reform initiative, provides a cash grant in place of food coupons. Cashout was implemented to all FSP households in three counties during 1990.

  An Electronic Benefits Transfer (EBT) project also is being considered. Alabama has conducted discussions with two neighboring states regarding the possibility of implementing an on-line EBT system to serve the three states.

- ***Notices.*** Recipient notices are generated automatically by the system and mailed from the central State office on a daily basis with the exceptions (e.g., Notice of Adverse Action, pending notices, etc.). Notices are generated for a variety of reasons including: events related to household participation or eligibility, warnings that a monthly report was not received, denial because of failure to keep appointments, eligibility determination results, benefit increases or reductions, and case closure based on recertification information. Paper copies of notices are not sent to the individual counties; however, monthly reports are printed downline and contain a case listing for all households sent automated notices.

  SCI-II is food stamp specific and generates notices only for FSP. State staff reported that approximately 130,000 notices are generated each month.

- ***Claims System.*** The claims process in Alabama is handled by the Comprehensive Claims System, a separate system that is interfaced to SCI-II and other assistance program systems. CCS is an on-line system for tracking and collecting overpayments made to clients. Data is exchanged between SCI-II and CCS on a daily basis.

  The claims system is partially automated. After the eligibility worker enters the cause of the overpayment or underpayment and whether fraud is suspected, the system calculates the corrected benefit allotment amount. CCS also tracks the claim's status, calculates the monthly recoupment amount, subtracts the recoupment amount from the recipient's monthly benefit issuance, and, in conjunction with the SCI-II system, generates a notice to the client regarding overpayment and automatically creates a collection record. This is a manual procedure not enforced by the system.

- ***Computer Matching.*** With the exception of the on-line search against a food stamp specific database of present and past recipients and applicants that occurs at registration, computer matching is conducted during overnight batch processing and the results are reported to the eligibility worker the next working day. Other computer matching is performed monthly for IEVS requirements. State unemployment compensation wage data and Social Security Administration (SSA) data also are used in the computer matching process. (This was a time match over two years ago, sponsored by the FNS Southeast Regional Office.)

  Discrepancies are reported through paper reports. Report files are downloaded to individual county offices, where the worker may print them. Discrepancies are removed from the system when information regarding the specific outcome of the investigation or resolution of the discrepancy has been entered into the system. The system requires workers to respond to all discrepancy items and enter the amount of time and direct cost associated with addressing the discrepancy.

  The system supports the tracking of match resolutions and uses a targeting scheme for identifying potential matches. The system tracks match resolutions and

provides reports to the eligibility worker and EW supervisor on a regular basis. A targeting scheme is used to qualify the number of "hits" against selected databases. Only those matches exceeding specific thresholds are reported to the eligibility worker.

- ***Alerts.*** There are no true on-line alerts in SCI-II, but the system has the ability to download print files of pre-formatted reports to the local offices. These report files then can be accessed or printed by local office staff.

- ***Monthly Reporting.*** The monthly reporting subsystem contains three modules. For cases in which monthly reporting is required, the client notice module generates the monthly reporting forms and produces statistics on clients subject to monthly reporting requirements. The client notice input module provides for the update of files with information reported on the returned monthly reporting forms. The client termination module terminates clients who do not return their monthly reporting forms.

  Workers supplement the system's monthly reporting functions in several areas. The eligibility worker is responsible for identifying clients subject to monthly reporting requirements and notifying the system of this determination. Data regarding the receipt of the monthly reporting forms may be entered into the system by either EWs or clerical staff, depending upon the size and procedures of the local office. Incomplete monthly reports require the manual preparation of a notice to be mailed to the client.

  The system produces the monthly reporting forms for mailing, directs returned forms to the EW, generates warning notices to clients whose reports are late, and automatically closes the cases if clients do not return the forms in the required timeframes. On-line screens are provided that indicate the status of monthly reporting forms.

- ***Report Generation.*** SCI-II does not provide true on-line reports for EWs, supervisors, or administrators; however, it does provide a variety of hard copy reports, some of which are downloaded to the local office where they can be printed.

  The system also provides the data necessary for the production of various Federally mandated reports including the FNS-250, FNS-46, FNS-259, FNS-388, and monthly reconciliation report. The data provided by the system must be re-formatted to produce the reports that are submitted to FNS.

- ***Program Management and Administration.*** SCI-II does not support the program management features that may be present in newer systems (e.g., electronic mail, on-line policy manuals, workload allocation monitoring, and on-line case narratives).

3.2 Level of Integration/Complexity

State staff indicated that SCI-II is considered to be a productive design; however, the system is based upon the design tenets popular ten to fifteen years ago. It is batch oriented and relies upon dedicated data entry operators who work from coding sheets prepared by field workers.

Interfaces to other State level systems have allowed this food stamp specific system to remain productive even though its basic design and functional philosophy have been left behind by more modern systems. Interfaces to other standalone systems (e.g., CCS and IEVS) and sub-systems enable the system to meet the needs of the Food Stamp Program staff in terms of claims, computer matching, and other functions.

The ICDB project should provide increased functionality and result in improvements in productivity; however, it is unclear how long Alabama can continue to rely upon the basic design of this aging system. The integration of the FSP database with the databases for AFDC and other assistance programs emphasizes efficiencies in "back-end" processing, but, by itself, this change does not significantly alter worker level efficiencies and worker/system interfaces.

3.3 Workstation/Caseworker Ratio

The specific number of workstations available for use by eligibility workers and other staff supporting the FSP was unavailable. State staff estimated that currently there is no more than more than one terminal for every four eligibility workers. Once ICDB becomes operational, the number of workstations will be increased to provide a dedicated terminal for each worker.

3.4 Current Automation Issues

Attention is focused primarily on the ICDB project and its anticipated impact upon the State's programmatic and technical environment and FSP staff expressed concerns about SCI-II. Food Stamp Program staff reported that there are sporadic problems with SCI-II, but that its overall support of program operations is functional, although far from user friendly.

4.0 SYSTEM DEVELOPMENT AND IMPLEMENTATION

This section of the report provides information regarding the development of the original SCI-II system and the ICDB project. Available information was incomplete because SCI-II was implemented over 10 years ago and ICDB is still being developed.

4.1 Overview of the Previous System

SCI-II has been operational since 1982. Information was unavailable about the system that supported FSP before SCI-II was developed. This section, therefore, discusses SCI-II. Section 3.1 provides a detailed description of the system's functionality. SCI-II is an on-line system with nightly batch processing. It is a standalone food stamp system and is not integrated with any other public assistance eligibility system. SCI-II is modeled on the centralized data entry concept and is supported by dedicated data entry operators who enter data from code sheets prepared by EWs.

PARS performs similar functions for the AFDC Program. Separate databases are maintained for PARS and SCI-II.

4.2 Justification for the New System

The May 1989 Advanced Planning Document (APD) for the Welfare Reform Project, provided the following reasons and expected improvements related to the development effort:

- Streamlining of the IEVS interface to save staff time with data inquiry and update functions and deal with inconsistencies across the two systems
- Automation of the interface with the Comprehensive Claims System
- Reduced data processing costs for public assistance cases
- Elimination of redundant data processing for public assistance cases by providing on-line update capabilities
- Improved recovery and "roll-back" features
- On-line access to IEVS data to provide the potential for error rate reduction
- Automation of the disqualification interface
- Reduction in the amount of forms and paper flow at the direct services offices
- Elimination of "off-line" days, during which the system performs batch processing and is not available for on-line updates or inquiries
- Improved data security and confidentiality
- Elimination of redundant data among the various eligibility determination systems
- Automation of the application process to ensure standardization across counties and reduce the time required to process an application

- Coordination of the computer generated reports with a revised manual filing system at local offices

- Automation of the Job Opportunities and Basic Skills (JOBS) components

4.3 Development and Implementation Activities

The State decided to proceed with the development of a new system in 1980. After conducting a feasibility study and a requirements analysis, Alabama submitted its initial APD for SCI-II in December 1980. FNS approved the APD in February 1981.

System development and implementation occurred between 1981 and 1983. The State prepared a general systems design, a detailed design, and system test plan during 1981. System implementation began in April 1981 and the system was fully implemented by July 1982.

December 1991 is considered to be the official beginning of the ICDB Project. FNS approved the submitted APD, but the Agency for Children and Families (ACF) within the Department of Health and Human Services had some concerns regarding the cost

4.5 Project Management

Project management for the Integrated Client Data Base project is provided by a core team led by a project manager. The ICDB project manager reports to the DHR Deputy Commissioner for Programs. The project manager, who previously was in the AFDC Program area and is fully dedicated to the project, possesses over 10 years of programmatic experience and has three years experience with a project of similar size and complexity in the Child Support Enforcement area.

The core project team consists of 11 individuals. One of the members represents the food stamp Program, one member of the team and the project manager are from the AFDC area, and four are programmer/analysts from DIS. The five other members represent CSE, Children Services, Quality Assurance, and similarly impacted areas.

Project staff expressed the belief that organizational, communication, negotiation, analytical, and motivational abilities are important to the project's success. Staff reported that they perceived a need for more technical analysts during the course of the project.

4.6 FSP Participation

Although formal user groups were not utilized during the ICDB Project, program input was received from administrative and supervisory staff representing all program areas during various phases of the project. Project staff reported that both FSP and AFDC management and eligibility workers participated in the planning phase of the project and were responsible for establishing requirements, making recommendations, and reviewing and approving progress. Meetings involving FSP personnel were held bi-weekly.

4.7 MIS Participation

Staff from the Division of Information Systems have participated in the ICDB project since it was initiated. DIS staff are involved in the core project team. In addition, DIS staff were responsible for creating the Planning APD (PAPD) and related documents before the ICDB project team was established and given responsibility for APD preparation.

4.8 Problems Encountered During Development and Implementation

There were significant time delays in the development schedule for ICDB. The two primary factors that accounted for schedule slippages included delays in receiving required Federal approvals and the insufficient number of qualified technical analysts on the project team. As discussed previously, ACF had concerns about the cost allocation plans, budget, and proposed timeframes for project completion presented in the APD. The State's efforts to resolve these problems, to obtain ACF approval, delayed project initiation.

The shortage of adequately trained technical analysts, particularly individuals with experience in KNOWLEDGEWARE and MAPPER software, delayed the scheduled

completion of some tasks. The data definition phase, for example, was originally scheduled to be completed in 18 months, but it actually required 26 months to complete.

5.0 TRANSFERABILITY

Alabama reviewed several states' systems in 1981 in conjunction with the SCI-II development effort. State systems reviewed included the New Mexico, Utah, and Louisiana food stamp systems. The New Mexico Food Stamp Management Information System (FSMIS) was selected as the transfer candidate. Several modifications were required to adapt the system to meet Alabama's needs, including modifications to user screens and reports, changes in the issuance system, addition of interfaces to other systems, and changes in monthly reporting.

The potential transferability of SCI-II, once ICDB is implemented, is unknown at this time because the degree to which ICDB will integrate assistance programs in Alabama has not been determined. If the ICDB project leads to an integrated system at the worker level, the system will be more attractive as a transfer candidate than it would if the program specific service delivery structure is maintained and programs are integrated only at the database level.

6.0 SYSTEM OPERATIONS

The following section provides a description of SCI-II. The description includes a profile of system hardware and a discussion of the system operating environment.

6.1 System Profile

The components supporting SCI-II are as follows:

- **Mainframe:** IBM 3090/600S
  MVS/ESA, CICS, IMS, DB2, RACF
- **Disk:** IBM 3380/3390
- **Tape:** Cartridge - Storage Tek 4780
  IBM 3480
  Reel - IBM 3420
  Silo - STK 4400
- **Printers:** Impact - IBM 4248
  Laser - Xerox 4090
- **Front Ends:** IBM 3745 and 3725
- **Workstations:** IBM and Telex 3270,
  Unisys B28 PCs (operating in 3270 emulation mode)

- **Telecommunications:** Statewide T1 backbone with five circuits connecting up to 300 9.6 KB and 19.2 KB tail circuits to Montgomery via SNA/3270 protocol

A detailed hardware listing is provided as Exhibit A-6.1 in Appendix A.

6.2 Description of Operating Environment

The operating environment consists of several components. This section describes these components, which include the current operating environment, maintenance, telecommunications, performance, response time, system downtime, and plans for future hardware and software enhancements.

6.2.1 Operating Environment

SCI-II, which supports FSP, is run on a mainframe at a central State data center operated by the Data Systems Management Division (DSMD) of the State Department of Finance. DSMD provides processing support for over 100 State agencies, including all DHR applications. DSMD also supports programs for the Department of Revenue, Public Safety, and the State Police. The DSMD data center runs a seven day, 24 hour operation with time allocated each day, between 4:30 a.m. and 6:00 a.m., for system initial program loads (IPLs), as required. The on-line processing window extends from 6:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m., when batch processing begins. Batch processing can run until 4:30 a.m. during peak processing periods; however, the batch cycle usually is completed by midnight.

The mainframe supporting all State applications is an IBM 3090/600S, running MVS/ESA, CICS, IMS, COBOL II, and automation scheduler tool CA/7. DHR uses nine CICS regions to support each of program areas including SCI-II (Food Stamp Program), PARS (AFDC), IEVS, FACETS (a demonstration project for interactive interviewing), and the Master terminal region (MTO). The CASE tool, KNOWLEDGEWARE, is used for project planning and design and TELON is used as a code generator. DSMD utilizes IBM's System Managed Storage (SMS) to manage auxiliary storage allocations among tape, disk, and a recently acquired optical disk system.

Peripheral equipment supporting the system are detailed in Exhibit A-6.1. DSMD has recently installed an IBM 3995 optical disk unit with 177 megabytes of storage; however, files have not yet been allocated to the device or definitive plans for its use formulated. A total of 566 gigabytes of direct access storage device (DASD) are currently installed. IBM 3420 reel-to-reel tape drives are used to support external and special tape requirements. The four STK 4400 Automated Library Systems (silos) are used to support the 50,000 volume cartridge library. Three of the silos are located within the data center and are used to process normal production workloads. The fourth unit is located in a building across the street and connected via fiber optics to the 3090/600S. This unit is used to store system backup tapes for data recovery purposes. Two full sets of backups can be stored in the silo at once.

DHR is using Unisys CTOS-based microcomputers to support office automation functions and the State uses KNOWLEDGEWARE as a CASE tool for project planning and design. Approval has been granted to replace this technology with NOVELL/DOS based local area networks (LANs) to enable more standard products to be used for office automation support.

An uninterruptible power supply (UPS) is installed to provide both battery and generator backup for the data center. Problems have arisen during the past year that State staff believe make the UPS system more of a liability than a safeguard. Data center staff indicated that 28 recent incidents of power failures have been linked to the UPS system. Since 1992, the State has been using vendor support in an attempt to identify and resolve the problems.

Currently, the State does not have a disaster recovery plan for DHR applications; however, some options are being examined. A contract is in place with IBM and there has been progress made towards creating a departmental disaster plan that will include critical application requirements. DSMD was participating in this study, but recently stopped. DSMD is working to gain approval for a second data center to off-load some production from the existing site and provide a hot site backup location. Approval of the plan has been delayed due to a recent change in State administration. State staff do not expect the second site to be implemented before 1995.

6.2.2 State Operations and Maintenance

The Division of Information Systems within the Alabama Department of Human Resources provides software, technical, and some operational support to the food stamp automated system, SCI-II. DIS coordinates its efforts with a liaison group located within the DHR program organization that creates technical specifications from user requirements and issues work order requests for DIS.

DSMD provides processing support to DHR and other State agencies and also is responsible for establishing the software and technical standards for all State agencies. Current software standards include DB2 for new database development, RACF for software and access security, COBOL II as the programming language, and VTAM as the accepted access method. Conversion of existing applications from COBOL to COBOL II is complete for all on-line programs and approximately 80 percent of batch programs.

DHR and DSMD operations and support staff include the following number and type of personnel: nine DIS operations staff, who control and monitor the Division's applications and printing; six network support staff; three software support staff including database administration and CICS specialists; two production control staff; two Help desk staff; 38 application programmers; and 17 management administration staff responsible for training, hardware installation, and related areas. Four of the application programmers are dedicated to SCI-II support. Four additional DIS staff are working on the Integrated Client Data Base Project.

State staff indicated that Alabama's ability to hire staff is constrained by the State's hiring freeze; however, in the absence of hiring freezes, the State does not have problems with recruiting and maintaining technical staff. Current staffing levels are marginally sufficient to support the application, but there has been a statewide hiring freeze in place for several years, so attrition is a potential problem. Temporary contractor support is available at times, but it can be eliminated quickly when budget reductions are required. The total staffing level is about the same as previous years, but since the system is 10 years old, there has not been any negative impact on the ability to support the application. Staff retention is not a major issue in Alabama because the weak economy has limited the number of external opportunities in the area. Since the State increased pay scales several years ago, it has been very competitive in the marketplace.

Hardware and software maintenance usually are planned for Sunday morning when production loads are very light. Full disk backups are performed every weekend and stored off site. Incremental backups are performed nightly for individual applications.

6.2.3 Telecommunications

Alabama has a statewide backbone network that supports all State agencies. The network consists of five T1 circuits connecting three concentrator sites -- Mobile, Birmingham, and Tuscaloosa -- to the DSMD data center in Montgomery. Mobile and Birmingham have two circuits each. From each of these concentrator points, tail circuits are dropped to each local site. The tail circuit network consist of approximately 300 dedicated and multi-dropped lines with speeds of 9.6 KB or 19.2 KB depending on transaction volumes. The network utilizes the SNA/3270 protocol to drive the transactions. The State is in the process of converting the majority of the circuits to digital technology. To reach all the locations in the entire state, it is necessary to use 37 local carriers. State staff indicated that some of the carriers have little, if any, redundancy and could become single points of failure; however, there are not any better alternatives.

6.2.4 System Performance

Data center staff estimated that the average prime shift utilization for the IBM 3090/600S is 80 percent. At peak periods, the processor utilization exceeds 90 percent. DHR's applications use only about 21 percent of the total system resources. State staff indicated that the processing volume associated with food stamp transactions is 75,000 transactions per day.

DSMD has recently acquired an IBM ES9000/620 to add to the data center, but the system has not yet been brought on-line. Attempts to bring this system up have caused interference with the production workload on the 600S. Plans regarding how the 9000/620 will be used and how applications will be split between the machines have not been finalized.

DHR staff did not identify any performance problems with the processing environment and had strong praise for DSMD's overall support.

6.2.5 System Response

Response time measurements for the month of September 1993 indicated that 94 percent of all circuits have response times of less than three seconds, and all remaining circuit response times do not exceed five seconds. Alabama monitors response time from the point the "enter" key is pressed to the screen write. DHR, both systems liaison staff and program staff, expressed high levels of satisfaction with the system's response time.

6.2.6 System Downtime

Alabama maintains detailed records on system availability and unscheduled outages which indicate that outages of the entire system or SCI-II application occur less than 0.2 percent of the time. System up time, therefore, is 99.8 percent. State staff did not express any concerns or issues related to system availability.

6.2.7 Current Activities and Future Plans

Alabama currently has plans for the following activities:

- Install a second system, an IBM ES9000/620, to augment the 3090/600S by the end of December 1993.
- Develop a second data center, located in Montgomery, as a concurrent production hot site for disaster recovery.
- Complete the Integrated Client Database Project, which will define all data elements needed to support an integrated public assistance system.
- Continue work on a demonstration project in three counties that uses an interactive interview and on-line eligibility determination and benefit calculation process for FSP and AFDC clients.

Other elements of the Department's long range information systems plan include expansion of the ICDB scope and related enhancements. The ICDB project provides the basis for developing an on-line interactive system to support all assistance programs including the Food Stamp, AFDC, Medicaid, and CSE Programs. In addition, DHR plans to develop the information systems to support adult services, family and children's services, and program integrity as well as a consolidated resource directory.

7.0 COST AND COST ALLOCATION

This section addresses the costs and approved Federal funding for automated system development efforts undertaken by the Alabama Department of Human Resources to support the Food Stamp Program since 1981. These development efforts include:

- SCI-II, the standalone system which has supported the Food Stamp Program since 1983
- IEVS, an upgrade to SCI-II
- ASSETS, a demonstration program to support the Alabama Welfare Reform Project[3]
- ICDB, an effort to design a logical, integrated database to support all DHR programs and provide needed administrative and management information

Additional topics addressed in this section include:

- On-going operational costs for SCI-II
- Cost allocation methodologies applied to allocating development and operating costs to FNS

Since SCI-II and IEVS development efforts occurred in the early and middle 1980s, respectively, the available record set is incomplete. More complete records are available for the ICDB and the ASSETS development efforts.

7.1 SCI-II Development Costs and Federal Funding

SCI-II was developed in FY 1981 and 1982. Statewide implementation was completed in 1983. With the implementation of IEVS, DHR gained the capability to support interfaces into wage and compensation data available in other automated systems. IEVS became operational in late 1987. SCI-II and the IEVS enhancement provide the automated capabilities that currently support the Food Stamp Program. The available cost information about these two efforts shows that:

- SCI-II actual development costs, as of May 1984, totalled $1.35 million. FNS funded the development effort at the 75 percent Federal financial participation (FFP) rate; total FNS funding was $1.0125 million.
- IEVS budgeted development costs totalled $734,000, which included $480,000 for equipment and $254,000 for personnel. Alabama requested 75 percent funding, or $550,500, from FNS.[4] IEVS cost information was limited to budgeted information because documentation pertaining to FNS approvals and actual costs incurred during IEVS development and implementation was not available.

In recent years, the Department has undertaken two additional efforts to enhance support for the Food Stamp Program. These efforts and their costs are as follow:

[3] The original APD was issued in May 1989.

[4] State of Alabama, Department of Human Resources, Schedule V-1 (FNS: SCI-II IEVS Enhancement Cost Estimates, 8/23/86, p. 1).

- ***ASSETS Demonstration Project.*** ASSETS and its cashout component were approved by FNS for a total of $1.86 million. The ASSETS portion was approved for $1.46 million; the FNS share was $969,732 or 66.4 percent. The Federal financial participation was 50 percent, and the FSP share after FFP was $484,866. The cashout component, approved for $396,811, was fully funded by FNS.

- ***ICDB.*** Total ICDB costs expended to date are $1,101,707. The Federal share of this amount is $407,177. The FNS share is 46.5 percent, or $189,189. The budgeted costs, as of January 1992, were $1.4 million. Of this amount, $1.2 million, or 86 percent, was earmarked for personnel costs. The effort is scheduled for completion in December 1993.

7.1.1 SCI-II System Components

SCI-II supports only the Food Stamp Program.

7.1.2 Major Development Cost Components

The actual costs incurred for SCI-II development were reported to be $1.35 million. The breakdown of actual SCI-II costs, including the IEVS enhancement, by cost component was not available.

Budgeted cost information, by development cost component, was available for both SCI-II and the IEVS enhancement. This information is presented in Table 7.1, Budgeted Development Costs for SCI-II and IEVS Enhancement. The table shows that the development costs incurred for SCI-II were significantly less than the budgeted amount. The amount underspent, $1,867,500, was 58 percent of the total budget. Funding for contractor support was not included in budgeted amounts.

Table 7.1 Budgeted Development Costs for SCI-II and IEVS Enhancement

COMPONENT	SCI-II	IEVS	TOTAL
Hardware	$1,256,400	$430,400	$1,686,800
Personnel	$1,345,400	$199,200	$1,544,600
Other	$615,700	$55,500	$671,200
Data Center	-	$49,100	$49,100
Budget Total	**$3,217,500**	$734,200	$3,951,700
Actual Total	**$1,350,000**	unknown	unknown

7.2 Operational Costs

Table 7.2, SCI-II Operating Costs, shows the operational charges submitted to FNS in the "ADP Oper Costs" column of the SF-269 for the four most recent fiscal years. The amount claimed for operational costs is comprised of direct, indirect, and non-operating costs. The Federal fiscal year (FFY) 1993 computer charges represent 51.4 percent of the amount submitted in the "ADP Oper Costs" column for that year.

Further review of computer charges for a one-month period shows that:

- The Food Stamp Program has allocated 20 percent of all computer charges associated with on-line CICS.
- Central Processing Unit (CPU) charges for the batch production system, which supports the Food Stamp Program, account for 49.5 percent of batch production costs.
- Indirect charges account for less than 2.0 percent of SF-269 ADP Operational Costs.

Table 7.2 SCI-II Operating Costs

FFY	SF-269 ADP OPER COSTS	FNS SHARE AT 50% FFP
1990	$704,129	$352,065
1991	$635,494	$317,747
1992	$799,611	$399,806
1993	$787,275	$393,638

7.2.1 Cost Per Case

The cost per case for FY 1992 was $0.32. This cost was calculated using the 1992 food stamp monthly caseload of 211,054 households and the average monthly SF-269 ADP operational costs of $66,634.

7.2.2 ADP Operational Cost Control Measures and Practices

SCI-II processing is performed in a State-owned and operated data center. All costs for technical support provided to SCI-II are charged directly to the Food Stamp Program. The salaries of data processing programmers are allocated based on individual time sheets submitted by each programmer. Fringe benefit costs and non-program travel costs are pooled and allocated based on consolidated time sheets for all programmers.

All SCI-II operations are performed in a single region of the processor. Since no other system operates in that region, all CPU, data access, and other charges incurred by operations in that region are directly charged to the Food Stamp Program. The *Distribution of Data Processing Costs from Data Center Summary Report*, generated by the RPS Cost Program job accounting system, reports the costs of computer resources used by the food stamp region for three types of system processing:

- Production system processing for SCI-II
- Processing required to maintain the production system
- Processing to support new development for the production system

Costs for each of these types of processing are collected for CPU, tape, and DASD usage. Similar costs are collected for CICS usage for each of the three types of processing. The CICS usage costs, however, are allocated to all Department programs based on the number of transactions processed in the CICS region for each program as a percentage of all transactions processed in the CICS region.

The data center bills the Department monthly for services provided during the preceding period. The billing rates are set by the data center and formally agreed to by the Department.

7.3 Alabama Cost Allocation Methodologies

This section describes the cost allocation methodologies used to allocate system development and on-going operational costs to the Food Stamp Program.

7.3.1 Historical Overview of Development Cost Allocation Methodology

Since SCI-II and the IEVS enhancement support the Food Stamp Program only, all costs associated with their development were allocated 100 percent to the Food Stamp Program.

ASSETS development costs were allocated to both the Food Stamp and AFDC Programs because the system designed to support ASSETS operated under the waiver authority of both programs. The original cost allocation methodology proposed by Alabama used a weighted caseload ratio to spread costs. FNS approved this methodology with the understanding that appropriate adjustments were to be made as needed.[5] In approving ASSETS funding, FNS accepted a 66.4 percent allocation of ASSETS development costs. The AFDC share was 33.6 percent.

[5] Letter, March 26, 1991.

7.3.2 SCI-II Operational Cost Allocation Methodology and Mechanics

All revenues and charges are assigned a group number: groups 1, 2, and 3 represent expenditures or charges; groups 4, 5, and 6 represent revenues. Each expenditure is further assigned to a reporting category:

- All direct charges are assigned to a reporting category between 0001 and 0999.
- All indirect charges are assigned to a reporting category greater than 0999.

A step number is assigned to a group of reporting categories. Each reporting category within a step is either a pool or a base number. A pool represents a reporting category which is used to accumulate costs; a base is associated with a percentage that will be used to allocate costs accumulated in the pool reporting categories of that same step. Eventually, as the allocation process steps down, all the costs accumulated into each pool reporting category are allocated to a base reporting category in the 8000 series. All

- Cost of items purchased for county food stamp offices, including postage, telephone, utilities, and equipment
- Court costs and other legal expenses attributed specifically to the Food Stamp Program
- Purchased services attributed to specific programs

7.3.2.2 Allocated Cost Pools

Random moment work sampling is used to allocate the cost of combination workers in the local offices. A separate sample is taken each month on the combination services workers and the combination eligibility direct workers. The results of these samples are used to allocate the cost of these two cost centers.

Costs are allocated to the Food Stamp Program using two bases: direct employee person-days and retirement share. Table 7.3, Allocated Cost Pools, provides a detailed list of all costs allocated using these two bases.

Table 7.3 Allocated Cost Pools

Costs prorated to all programs based on person-days of direct employees include: • Salaries, fringe benefits, and travel of overhead support staff • DHR share of State Personnel Department • Costs of central support agencies within the State of Alabama • Computer services for personnel and other activities applicable to all programs • State telephone network • Repairs and maintenance of equipment used in State offices • Rental of buildings and equipment for overhead support staff
Costs prorated to all direct programs based on the applicable portion of salaries charged to each program include direct and allocated salary costs, employer's share of Employee's Retirement System, and Social Security.
Costs prorated by person-days to all direct programs except projects operated in State office only and food stamp only offices include: • Supplies and services provided to county departments by local public agencies • Equipment provided to county departments by local public agencies • Telephone services provided to county departments by local public agencies

APPENDIX A

STATE OF ALABAMA

EXHIBITS

Exhibit A-2.1
Response to Regulatory Changes

Code	Regulation	Provision	Federally Required Implementation Date	Implemented on Time (Y/N)?	Computer Programming Changes Required (Y/N)?	Changes to State Policy/ Legislation Required (Y/N)?
1.1	1: Mickey Leland Memorial Domestic Hunger Relief Act	1: Excludes as income State or local GA payments to DHHS provided as vendor payments. 273.9(c)(1)(ii)(F)	8/1/91	N/A	N/A	N/A
1.2	1: Mickey Leland Memorial Domestic Hunger Relief Act	2: Excludes from income annual school clothing allowance however paid. 273.9(c)(5)(i)(F)	8/1/91	N/A	N/A	N/A
1.3	1: Mickey Leland Memorial Domestic Hunger Relief Act	3: Excludes as resource for food stamp purposes, household resources exempt by Public Assistance (PA) and SSI in mixed household. 273.8(e)(17)	2/1/92*	Y	Y	N
1.4	1: Mickey Leland Memorial Domestic Hunger Relief Act	4: State agency shall use a standard estimate of shelter expense for households with homeless members. 273.9(d)(5)(i)	2/1/92*	N	Y	Y
2.1	2: Administrative Improvement & Simplification Provisions of the Hunger Prevention Act	1: Extended resource exclusion of farm property and vehicles. 273.8(e)(5),etc.	7/1/89	Y	N	N
2.2	2: Administrative Improvement & Simplification Provisions of the Hunger Prevention Act	2: Combined initial allotment under normal time frames. 274.2(b)(2)	1/1/90	Y	Y	N
2.3	2: Administrative Improvement & Simplification Provisions of the Hunger Prevention Act	3: Combined initial allotment under expedited service time frames. 274.2(b)(3)	1/1/90	Y	Y	N

Exhibit A-2.1
Response to Regulatory Changes

Code	Regulation	Provision	Federally Required Implementation Date	Implemented on Time (Y/N)?	Computer Programming Changes Required (Y/N)?	Changes to State Policy/ Legislation Required (Y/N)?
3.1	3: Disaster Assistance Act & Non-Discretionary Provisions of the Hunger Prevention Act	1: Exclusion of job stream migrant vendor payments. 273.9(c)(1)(ii)	9/1/88	Y	N	N
3.2	3: Disaster Assistance Act & Non-Discretionary Provisions of the Hunger Prevention Act	2: Exclusion of advance earned income tax credit payments. 273.9(c)(14)	1/1/89*	Y	N	N
3.3	3: Disaster Assistance Act & Non-Discretionary Provisions of the Hunger Prevention Act	3: Increase dependent care deductions. 273.9(f)(4), etc.	10/1/88	Y	Y	N
3.4	3: Disaster Assistance Act & Non-Discretionary Provisions of the Hunger Prevention Act	4: Eliminate migrant initial month proration. 273.10(a)(1)(ii)	9/1/88	Y	N	N
4.1	4: Issuance	1: Mail issuance must be staggered over at least ten days. 274.2(c)(1)	4/1/89	Y	N	N
4.2	4: Issuance	2: Limitation on the number of replacement issuances. 274.6(b)(2)	10/1/89	Y	N	N
4.3	4: Issuance	3: Destruction of unusable coupons within 30 days. 274.7(f)	4/1/89	Y	N	N

* These dates were changed after the State completed this form and the site visit occurred; therefore, the responses to these particular regulatory changes may be inaccurate.

Exhibit A-6.1
State of Alabama Hardware Inventory

Component	Make	Acquisition Method	Number/ Features
CPU			
3090/600S	IBM	Purchase	64 channels, 256 MB main storage, 512 MB expanded storage, 104 MIPS
DISK			
3380/3390	IBM	Purchase	Drives - 3390 (8) 3380 (24) Controllers - 3990 (3) 3880 (5)
TAPE			
Reel Tape Drives	IBM	Purchase	3420 (11)
Cartridge Drives	IBM Storage Tek	Purchase Purchase	3480 (20) 4780 - drives, 4400 - silo (4)
PRINTERS			
Impact	IBM	Purchase	4248 (3)
Laser	Xerox	Purchase	4090 (2)
FRONT ENDS			
FEP	IBM	Purchase	3745 (2) 3725 (1)
REMOTE EQUIPMENT			
Workstations	IBM/Telex	Purchase	3270 terminals (615)
	Unisys	Purchase	CTOS B28s (150)

APPENDIX B

STATE OF ALABAMA

ANALYSIS OF OPERATOR USER SATISFACTION SURVEYS

OVERVIEW

This appendix presents the results of the Operational Level User Satisfaction Survey. Frequency counts of responses to all applicable items on the survey are included, grouped by the topic covered by the item. The results for the items covering each topic are summarized as well.

The responses to the Operational Level User Satisfaction Survey represent the perceptions of eligibility workers (EWs) in Alabama. In other words, these responses do not necessarily represent a "true" description of the situation in Alabama. For example, the results presented regarding the response time of the system reflect the workers' perceptions about response time, not an objective measure of the actual speed of the response.

Description of the Sample

The following table summarizes the potential population size and the final size of the sample who responded.

Number of EWs in Alabama	Number Selected to Receive Survey	Percentage Selected
469	N/A	N/A
	Number Responding to Survey	Response Rate
	73	N/A

Survey forms were provided to one person in the State with the expectation that the forms would be distributed randomly to eligibility workers. It is not known exactly how many surveys were distributed, but the number of eligibility workers who responded, as a percentage of the total eligibility worker population, was large enough that their perceptions should be representative of eligibility workers in Alabama.

Summary of Findings

Most of the respondents are satisfied with the computer system in Alabama. They generally find it responsive, available, accurate, and easy to use. Nevertheless, EW responses indicate some perceived problems with the system. A majority of workers feel that the system sometimes or often contains data that is not current. Just over 50 percent of the workers also report having difficulty obtaining necessary information from the system.

Since Alabama's current system has been operational since 1983, comparisons between the current and previous systems would be of limited value. Responses to comparative questions, therefore, are not solicited for systems that were implemented more than five years ago.

SYSTEM CHARACTERISTICS

Response Time

What is the quality of overall system response time?

	Number of Respondents	Percentage of Respondents (%)
Poor	2	2.7
Good	58	79.5
Excellent	13	17.8

What is the quality of system response time during peak periods?

	Number of Respondents	Percentage of Respondents (%)
Poor	14	19.4
Good	54	75.0
Excellent	4	5.6

How often is the system response time too slow?

	Number of Respondents	Percentage of Respondents (%)
Rarely	26	35.6
Sometimes	40	54.8
Often	7	9.6

EWs generally think that system response time is acceptable. More than 97 percent of the eligibility workers think that overall system response time is excellent or good, and almost 81 percent believe that response time is excellent or good during peak processing periods. Less than 10 percent of the eligibility workers believe that response time often is too slow.

Availability

How often is the system available when you need to use it?

	Number of Respondents	Percentage of Respondents (%)
Rarely	3	4.1
Sometimes	9	12.3
Often	61	83.6

How often is the system down?

	Number of Respondents	Percentage of Respondents (%)
Rarely	35	47.9
Sometimes	32	43.8
Often	6	8.2

A large majority of eligibility workers believes that the system often is available when they need to use it, but just over half also think that the system is sometimes or often down. The system downtime, however, does not seem to be intrusive enough to detract from the perception that the system generally is available.

Accuracy

What is the quality of the information in the system?

	Number of Respondents	Percentage of Respondents (%)
Poor	7	9.6
Good	56	76.7
Excellent	10	13.7

How often is a case terminated in error?

	Number of Respondents	Percentage of Respondents (%)
Rarely	52	72.2
Sometimes	18	25.0
Often	2	2.8

How often is eligibility incorrectly determined?

	Number of Respondents	Percentage of Respondents (%)
Rarely	61	84.7
Sometimes	11	15.3

How often is the system's data out-of-date?

	Number of Respondents	Percentage of Respondents (%)
Rarely	31	43.7
Sometimes	36	50.7
Often	4	5.6

The eligibility workers generally think the system's data and computations are quite accurate; however, a majority believes that the system sometimes or often contains out-of-date information.

Ease of Use

How often do you have difficulty obtaining necessary information from the system?

	Number of Respondents	Percentage of Respondents (%)
Rarely	36	49.3
Sometimes	35	47.9
Often	2	2.7

How often do you have difficulty learning to use the system?

	Number of Respondents	Percentage of Respondents (%)
Rarely	62	86.1
Sometimes	9	12.5
Often	1	1.4

How often do you have difficulty tracking receipt of monthly reporting forms?

	Number of Respondents	Percentage of Respondents (%)
Rarely	51	70.8
Sometimes	16	22.2
Often	5	6.9

How often do you have difficulty automatically terminating benefits for failure to file?

	Number of Respondents	Percentage of Respondents (%)
Rarely	51	73.9
Sometimes	13	18.8
Often	5	7.2

How often do you have difficulty generating adverse action notices?

	Number of Respondents	Percentage of Respondents (%)
Rarely	47	72.3
Sometimes	12	18.5
Often	6	9.2

How often do you have difficulty generating warning notices?

	Number of Respondents	Percentage of Respondents (%)
Rarely	45	70.3
Sometimes	14	21.9
Often	5	7.8

How often do you have difficulty determining monthly reporting status?

	Number of Respondents	Percentage of Respondents (%)
Rarely	60	82.2
Sometimes	11	15.1
Often	2	2.7

How often do you have difficulty restoring benefits?

	Number of Respondents	Percentage of Respondents (%)
Rarely	62	86.1
Sometimes	8	11.1
Often	2	2.8

How often do you have difficulty identifying recipients already known to the State?

	Number of Respondents	Percentage of Respondents (%)
Rarely	52	72.2
Sometimes	19	26.4
Often	1	1.4

How often do you have difficulty updating registration data?

	Number of Respondents	Percentage of Respondents (%)
Rarely	55	82.1
Sometimes	11	16.4
Often	1	1.5

How often do you have difficulty updating eligibility and benefit information from recertification data?

	Number of Respondents	Percentage of Respondents (%)
Rarely	63	86.3
Sometimes	9	12.3
Often	1	1.4

How often do you have difficulty identifying cases which are overdue for recertification?

	Number of Respondents	Percentage of Respondents (%)
Rarely	59	85.5
Sometimes	8	11.6
Often	2	2.9

How often do you have difficulty monitoring the status of all hearings?

	Number of Respondents	Percentage of Respondents (%)
Rarely	44	83.0
Sometimes	7	13.2
Often	2	3.8

How often do you have difficulty tracking outstanding verifications?

	Number of Respondents	Percentage of Respondents (%)
Rarely	36	64.3
Sometimes	15	26.8
Often	5	8.9

How often do you have difficulty automatically notifying households of case actions?

	Number of Respondents	Percentage of Respondents (%)
Rarely	48	66.7
Sometimes	17	23.6
Often	7	9.7

How often do you have difficulty notifying recipients that recertification is required?

	Number of Respondents	Percentage of Respondents (%)
Rarely	57	85.1
Sometimes	8	11.9
Often	2	3.0

How often do you have difficulty identifying cases making payments through recoupment?

	Number of Respondents	Percentage of Respondents (%)
Rarely	47	77.0
Sometimes	11	18.0
Often	3	4.9

How often do you have difficulty identifying error prone cases?

	Number of Respondents	Percentage of Respondents (%)
Rarely	33	63.5
Sometimes	11	21.1
Often	8	15.4

How often do you have difficulty identifying cases involving suspected fraud?

	Number of Respondents	Percentage of Respondents (%)
Rarely	35	59.3
Sometimes	17	28.8
Often	7	11.9

How often do you have difficulty assigning new case numbers?

	Number of Respondents	Percentage of Respondents (%)
Rarely	59	93.7
Sometimes	2	3.2
Often	2	3.2

Eligibility workers' responses to these questions express the feeling that the system is easy to use for most functions for the majority of workers. At least one third of the workers, however, sometimes or often have problems obtaining information from the system, tracking outstanding verifications, and identifying error prone cases or cases involving suspected fraud. Eligibility workers also report experiencing few problems learning to use the system.

FOOD STAMP PROGRAM NEEDS

Worker Satisfaction Levels

How often is the system a great help to you in your job?

	Number of Respondents	Percentage of Respondents (%)
Sometimes	7	9.6
Often	66	90.4

How often is the system an added stress in your job?

	Number of Respondents	Percentage of Respondents (%)
Rarely	45	62.5
Sometimes	25	34.7
Often	2	2.8

How often is the system more of a problem than a help?

	Number of Respondents	Percentage of Respondents (%)
Rarely	59	81.9
Sometimes	11	15.3
Often	2	2.8

Eligibility workers generally think that the system is an asset that helps them in their jobs. Although approximately 38 percent of the workers believe that the system contributes to job-related stress, nearly 82 percent believe that the system is more helpful than problematic.

Client Service

How often is expedited service difficult to achieve?

	Number of Respondents	Percentage of Respondents (%)
Rarely	54	78.3
Sometimes	11	15.9
Often	4	5.8

How often do you have difficulty providing expedited services?

	Number of Respondents	Percentage of Respondents (%)
Rarely	62	91.2
Sometimes	5	7.4
Often	1	1.5

Eligibility workers feel that there are few problems associated with providing expedited service to clients.

Fraud and Errors

No data are available to address fraud and errors with the Alabama system because all the questions in this category compare the current and previous systems. Since Alabama's system was implemented more than five years ago, comparative questions are not applicable.

APPENDIX C

STATE OF ALABAMA

ANALYSIS OF MANAGERIAL USER SATISFACTION SURVEYS

OVERVIEW

This appendix presents the results of the Managerial Level User Satisfaction Survey. Frequency counts of responses to all applicable items on the survey are included, grouped by the topic covered by the item. The results for the items covering each topic are summarized as well.

The responses to the Managerial Level User Satisfaction Survey are the perceptions of eligibility worker (EW) supervisors in Alabama. In other words, these responses do not necessarily represent a "true" description of the situation in the State. For example, the results presented regarding the response time of the system reflect the managers' perceptions about that response time, not an objective measure of the actual speed of the response.

Description of the Sample

The following table summarizes the potential population size and the final size of the sample who responded.

Number of Supervisors in Alabama	Number Selected to Receive Survey	Percentage Selected
132	N/A	N/A
	Number Responding to Survey	Response Rate
	43	N/A

Survey forms were provided to one person in the State with the expectation that the forms would be distributed randomly to eligibility worker supervisors. It is not known exactly how many surveys were distributed, but the number of EW supervisors who responded, as a percentage of the total EW supervisor population, was large enough that their perceptions should be representative of eligibility worker supervisors in Alabama.

Summary of Findings

Most of the supervisors regard the system positively and believe that it helps them in their jobs. The vast majority of EW supervisors report that response time, system availability, accuracy, and ease of use are good. Almost all respondents find the system easy to learn. A significant subset, however, feel that the system adds stress to their jobs.

Since Alabama's current system has been operational since 1983, comparisons between the current and previous systems would be of limited value. Responses to comparative questions, therefore, are not solicited for systems that were implemented more than five years ago.

SYSTEM CHARACTERISTICS

Response Time

What is the quality of overall system response time?

	Number of Respondents	Percentage of Respondents
Poor	4	9.3
Good	35	81.4
Excellent	4	9.3

What is the quality of system response time during peak periods?

	Number of Respondents	Percentage of Respondents
Poor	12	27.9
Good	30	69.8
Excellent	1	2.3

How often is the system response time too slow?

	Number of Respondents	Percentage of Respondents
Rarely	15	34.9
Sometimes	27	62.8
Often	1	2.3

EW supervisors in Alabama generally think that system response time is acceptable. Over 90 percent of the supervisors surveyed think that overall system response time is good or excellent, and over 70 percent are satisfied with response time during peak periods. Only two percent of the supervisors feel that slow response time is a frequent problem.

Availability

How often is the system available when you need to use it?

	Number of Respondents	Percentage of Respondents
Sometimes	3	7.0
Often	40	93.0

How often is the system down?

	Number of Respondents	Percentage of Respondents
Rarely	23	53.5
Sometimes	19	44.2
Often	1	2.3

EW supervisors think that system availability generally is good; only one respondent believes that the system often is unavailable. Although a significant minority indicated that the system sometimes is down, this downtime apparently is not intrusive enough to detract from the perception of overall system availability.

Accuracy

What is the quality of the information in the system?

	Number of Respondents	Percentage of Respondents
Poor	4	9.5
Good	35	83.3
Excellent	3	7.1

Over 90 percent of EW supervisors feel that the system contains accurate information.

Ease of Use

How often do you have difficulty obtaining necessary information from the system?

	Number of Respondents	Percentage of Respondents
Rarely	18	41.9
Sometimes	24	55.8
Often	1	2.3

How often do you have difficulty learning to use the system?

	Number of Respondents	Percentage of Respondents
Rarely	37	88.1
Sometimes	4	9.5
Often	1	2.4

How often do you have difficulty tracking receipt of monthly reporting forms?

	Number of Respondents	Percentage of Respondents
Rarely	24	55.8
Sometimes	15	34.9
Often	4	9.3

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How often do you have difficulty automatically terminating benefits for failure to file?

	Number of Respondents	Percentage of Respondents
Rarely	27	64.3
Sometimes	12	28.6
Often	3	7.1

How often do you have difficulty generating adverse action notices?

[redacted]

How often do you have difficulty determining monthly reporting status?

	Number of Respondents	Percentage of Respondents
Rarely	32	76.2
Sometimes	8	19.0
Often	2	4.8

How often do you have difficulty restoring benefits?

	Number of Respondents	Percentage of Respondents
Rarely	37	86.0
Sometimes	6	14.0

EW supervisors generally feel that the system is easy to use. For each of the functions discussed except one, a majority of supervisors indicate that it is rarely difficult to perform the function. Over 55 percent of supervisors feel that it sometimes is difficult to obtain information from the system. EW supervisors also report some problems with notice generation. Over 11 percent often have difficulty generating adverse action notices, and 15 percent have similar problems with warning notices.

FOOD STAMP PROGRAM NEEDS

Supervisor Satisfaction Levels

How often is the system a great help to you in your job?

	Number of Respondents	Percentage of Respondents
Sometimes	7	16.3
Often	36	83.7

How often is the system an added stress in your job?

	Number of Respondents	Percentage of Respondents
Rarely	20	46.5
Sometimes	22	51.2
Often	1	2.3

A significant majority of EW supervisors feel that the system often is a great help in performing their jobs; however, a majority also feels that there are occasions when the system contributes to job-related stress.

Management Needs

What is the quality of the reports produced by the system?

	Number of Respondents	Percentage of Respondents
Poor	6	14.3
Good	35	83.3
Excellent	1	2.4

What is the quality of the support provided by the technical staff supporting the automated system?

	Number of Respondents	Percentage of Respondents
Poor	5	11.6
Good	31	72.1
Excellent	7	16.3

How often do you have difficulty making mass changes to the system?

	Number of Respondents	Percentage of Respondents
Rarely	12	40.0
Sometimes	12	40.0
Often	6	20.0

How often do you have difficulty meeting Federal reporting requirements?

	Number of Respondents	Percentage of Respondents
Rarely	26	72.2
Sometimes	9	25.0
Often	1	2.8

EW supervisors feel that the system generally meets management needs. Significant majorities feel that system reports and technical staff support are good to excellent. Sixty percent of the supervisors, however, report having some problems making mass changes to the system.

Client Service

No data are available to address client service because all the questions in this category compare the current and previous systems. Since Alabama's system was implemented more than five years ago, comparative questions are not applicable.

Fraud and Errors

No data are available to address fraud and errors with the Alabama system because all the questions in this category compare the current and previous systems. Since Alabama's system was implemented more than five years ago, comparative questions are not applicable.